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REVIEW: KUANG BIAO 'THE KNOCKOUT' BY
ZHU JUNYI AND XU JIZHOU

Zhu Junyi 朱俊懿 and Xu Jizhou. 徐纪周 2023. *Kuang Biao 狂飙* [*The Knockout*]. Qingdao 青岛: Qingdao chubanshe 青岛出版社 [Qingdao Publishing House]. 485pp. ISBN: 978-7-5736-0430-9 (paperback 68 RMB)

Reviewed by Wu Jing 吴晶 and Ye Boyu 叶伯钰
Shaanxi Normal University 陕西师范大学

Acclaimed by viewers since its broadcast on 14 January 2023 on China Central Television Drama Channel (CCTV-8)¹ and simulcast by iQiyi,² *Kuang Biao 'The Knockout'* has been an immensely successful TV procedural drama, propelling it to the top in ratings. It received praise from the audience, ranking first in average ratings among evening TV series on satellite channels.³ It enjoyed a peak iQiyi content popularity index of 11,800, making this crime series the show with the highest index in iQiyi history. The drama also reached a record high of 3.8 percent in its real-time peak viewership index on CCTV-8 and received critical acclaim from viewers.⁴ As of 27 January 2024, more than 85 percent of the reviewers on Douban, an influential Chinese media review platform,

¹ CCTV Drama Channel (abbreviation: CCTV-8), broadcasting TV dramas, began broadcast 1 January 1996 (<https://bit.ly/3Rnurjm>, accessed 18 April 2023).

² iQiyi, a video streaming platform, offers a massive selection of Chinese content, Asian content, and international movies and dramas (bit.ly/48DL2X6, accessed 18 December 2023).

³ Satellite television or satellite TV is broadcast delivery based on space satellite signals (<https://bit.ly/48V3MSn>, accessed 18 December 2023).

⁴ <https://bit.ly/3vl8jik>, accessed 18 December 2023.

rated it four of five stars or above, resulting in a peaking rating of 8.5 /10.⁵

In the same year, Qingdao Publishing House released a novel of the same name adapted from the script of the TV series *Kuang Biao* and co-authored by Xu Jizhou (b. 1976) and Zhu Junyi. Xu, a Chinese screenwriter and director, graduated from the Directing Department at the Central Academy of Drama in 2000. In 2012, he was recognized as the Most Powerful Director at the 18th Shanghai Television Festival's Magnolia Awards¹ for the success of the TV series he directed, *Yongbumomie de fanhao 'Designation Forever'*. A decade later, Xu was nominated for Best Director at the 28th Shanghai Television Festival's Magnolia Awards, owing to *Kuang Biao*'s success.

Xu's directorial works focus on police and anti-war stories set in a wide range of periods, thematizing justice that can never be defeated and embodying social changes. *Yongbumomie de fanhao 'Forever Designation'* (2011) and *Chunjiang yingxiong zhi xiucai yushang bing 'XiuCai'*² *Encountered Soldiers'* (2015) narrate the story of people banded together in Northeast China to fight invaders during the war of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, emphasizing the Chinese spirit of perseverance and solidarity against adversaries. *Xinlizui zhi chengshi zhi guang 'The*

⁵ <https://movie.douban.com/subject/35465232/>, accessed 27 January 2024.

¹ The Magnolia Award (Shanghai TV Festival Magnolia Award), founded in 1986, is an international TV award organized by the State Administration of Radio and Television of China, China Central Radio and Television (CCTV), and Shanghai Municipal People's Government. It is hosted by the Shanghai Radio and Television Bureau and the Shanghai Radio and Television Station, (bit.ly/4aIWgvh, accessed 20 April 2023).

² *Xiucai*, a reference to "cultivated talent," was a title bestowed on graduates of an examination in the state examination system created during the Sui (581-618) and Tang (618-907) dynasties. Today, it generally refers to a talented person. See <https://bit.ly/42ezxDt>, accessed 6 January 2024 for more.

Liquidator' (2017) depicts detective Fang Mu's apprehending a psychopathic murderer.

With years of experience directing and writing police dramas, Xu has developed a unique narrative perspective on creating scripts that prepared him for writing *Kuang Biao*, representing his experience directing police dramas, his reflections on social realities, and his explorations of complex human nature. The different narrative perspective, twisting plotlines, and excellent characterization differentiate it from such contemporaneous works as *Ta shi shui 'Who Is He'* (2023) and Xiaoshi de shiyiceng '*The Lost Eleventh Floor*' (2023).

According to an interview with Xu by Phoenix New Media¹ on 15 February 2023, the novel's title is from the last line of a lyric poem named *Dielianhua Cong Tingzhou xiang Changsha*² written by Mao Zedong (1893-1976).³

蝶恋花·从汀州向长沙
六月天兵征腐恶，
万丈长缨要把鲲鹏缚。
赣水那边红一角，
偏师借重黄公略。
百万工农齐踊跃，
席卷江西直捣湘和鄂。

¹ Phoenix New Media is a cross-platform online new media company with three major platforms: Internet media website (www.ifeng.com), mobile channel, and video channel (v.ifeng.com). See bit.ly/3TLCVDW (accessed 19 December 2023).

² Mao Zedong composed this in September 1930 when the Red Army suffered heavy losses during the siege of Changsha. Mao ordered a retreat on 13 September. The lyric expresses the revolutionary enthusiasm and fighting spirit of workers and peasants. See bit.ly/3H7SdLm (accessed 20 April 2023).

³ Mao Zedong led the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese People's Liberation Army, and the People's Republic of China (bit.ly/41EP6nV, accessed 20 April 2023).

国际悲歌歌一曲，
狂飙为我从天落。

Translated as *Tune: 'Butterflies Lingering Over Flowers March from Tingzhou to Changsha (July 1930)'* by the Chinese translator Xu Yuanchong⁴ (Xu 2020:146):

Heavenly troops wage war in June on evil lords,
Ready to capture rocs and whales with long, long cords.
Beyond the River Gan a corner blazes red,
Thanks to the army with Huang Gonglue at its head.
A million workers and peasants all leap and bound,
Sweeping Jiangxi, on Hunan and Hubei they pound,
The stirring strains of "the Internationale" rise;
A furious storm comes down for our sake from the skies.

Kuang Biao 'Furious Storm' metaphorically denotes an unstoppable revolutionary force (Zhou 2019:34), referring to the struggle between An Xin and Gao Qiqiang,¹ and the inescapable force of justice the former represents.

Xu Jizhou uses two English translations - The Knockout and Punch Out. "Knockout"² refers to the end of a boxing match when a boxer hits his opponent so hard that he falls and cannot get up. It also is a competition in which only the winner at each stage continues to play until there is only one winner. "Punch out"³ suggests the time you leave work and put a card into a machine. "Punch someone out" is hitting them so hard they become

⁴ Xu Yuanchong's (1921-2021) translations include Chinese, English, and French with an emphasis on English translations of ancient Chinese poetry. His best-known works include the English version of Poetic Edda and Ch'u Rhetoric (bit.ly/41FZonM, accessed 20 April 2023).

¹ The novel's protagonists.

² bit.ly/3tBQ8o1, accessed 5 May 2023.

³ bit.ly/47rFFJS, accessed 19 April 2023.

unconscious. Kuang Biao refers to a duel in line with the rivalry between the underworld leader, Gao Qiqiang, and the grassroots police officer, An Xin.

The novel's background is early 21st-century China after entering the World Trade Organization. The economy is growing rapidly, and numerous opportunities are created, igniting soaring aspirations. Young people have numerous options, including committing crimes to gain riches for a materially better life. The novel has the structure of a three-act play, presenting China's evolving social trajectory, depicting societal issues in three different periods, and exploring the complexity of human nature using choices the characters make in response to real-life temptations.

With the corresponding titles of An Liu 'Undercurrent', Feng Lang 'Wind and Wave', and Ping Jing 'Calm' (my translation), three sections of the novel depict social conflicts in three different periods, highlighting shifts in the objectives and tactics of criminals represented by the protagonist, Gao Qiqiang.

Set in fictional Jinghai, the plot unfolds with the imprisonment of the kind-hearted, honest, and obscure fishmonger, Gao Qiqiang, whose parents died in a car accident when he was thirteen. With 500 *yuan* in compensation, he rents a stall in a vegetable market, sells fish to support his family, and eventually sees his younger brother (Gao Qisheng) and sister (Gao Qilan) through college.

At the story's beginning, brutal Tang Xiaolong and Tang Xiaohu manipulate the market where Gao Qiqiang sells fish. Gao offers the hooligans a bribe to regain control of his fish stall, but they refuse because the amount is too small. Thus, Gao loses his stall and is beaten. Further conflicts between the two sides erupt, resulting in Gao's imprisonment. A police officer, An Xin, learns what happens and helps and protects Gao after his release.

Gao Qisheng is introduced to the idea of selling Xiaolingtong¹ through his classmate, Cao Bin, and learns he can make a big profit. He returns home in his last semester and introduces it to Gao Qiqiang. They prepare for this pursuit but lack 30,000 *yuan* as a bribe to a boss who can help them with their business.

Meanwhile, Xu Lei, the son of Xu Jiang, the leader of organ trafficking, angers Bai Jiangbo by incurring a debt to him. Bai Jiangbo asks the Tang brothers to beat Xu in revenge and receive 50,000 *yuan*. Coincidentally, Tang Xiaolong offers Gao Qiqiang 30,000 *yuan* if he beats Xu Lei. Desperate for 30,000 *yuan*, Gao agrees. Unexpectedly, Xu Lei is accidentally electrocuted when Gao approaches him.

After discovering Bai Jiangbo sent the Tang brothers to beat his son, Xu Jiang is furious after his son's death and kidnaps Tang Xiaohu in revenge. Before Bai Jiangbo is buried alive by Xu Jiang, Bai's wife (Chen Shuting) flees Jinghai with their son. Tang Xiaolong seeks Gao Qiqiang's assistance to save his brother. The police suspect that Tang Xiaohu may have been involved in organ trafficking due to a lack of money. Tang Xiaohu's kidnapping and the police's investigation into organ trafficking are related to Xu Jiang. Consequently, Gao Qiqiang suspects that Xu Jiang may be the mastermind of organ trafficking. In exchange for Tang Xiaohu, Xu Jiang asks Gao Qiqiang and Tang Xiaolong to kill Chen Shuting, who knows the truth about her husband's death.

Gao Qiqiang and Tang Xiaolong wait in ambush to hijack Chen Shuting and mistakenly believe she is escorted by An Xin and is in his car. In fact, Chen Shuting is escorted back to Jinghai by Li Xiang, An Xin's best friend and colleague. Entrusting his brother to Gao Qiqiang, Tang Xiaolong independently attacks An Xin and

¹ Xiaolingtong is wireless technology that allows limited roaming at the cost of fixed telephony. In 2024, it generally referred to a type of cell phone that was popular in the early 2000s (bit.ly/47meG29, accessed 23 April 2023).

snatches An's gun, which leads to apprehension for attacking the police.

At this moment, Gao Qiqiang still has a chance to lead a normal life after unintentionally becoming entangled in a murder case if he confesses to An Xin that he and Tang Xiaolong were accomplices in attacking the police officer. However, the lure of money and power makes Gao Qiqiang commit more serious crimes.

Gao Qiqiang falls in love with Chen Shuting the moment he lays eyes on her. Following their marriage, thanks to Chen Shuting's connection with Tai Shu 'Uncle Tai' (my translation), the owner of the Jiangong Group and monopolist of Jinghai's real estate market, Gao Qiqiang venerates Uncle Tai as his godfather. A few years later, Gao Qiqiang is promoted to general manager of the Jiangong Group and oversees the resort Mang Cun 'Mang Village' project (my translation).

The government's demolition of Mang Village conflicts with the resort plan that Gao Qiqiang intends to implement in Mang Village. The party represented by Li Youtian, the head of Mang Village, and his son, Li Hongwei, attempt to gain extra profit through the government's demolition of Mang Village, exceeding the benefits Gao Qiqiang provided. Their ensuing conflict intensifies and cannot be reconciled.

In the meantime, the journalist, Meng Yu, An Xin's girlfriend, is exposed when she investigates a drug deal in Mengyuan Bar. She is kidnapped by Zhong Asi (Gao Qisheng's henchman involved in the drug business), and Li Hongwei.

While the police apprehend the kidnapper and rescue Meng Yu, they uncover the drug business. Gao Qiqiang is told by Gong Kaijiang, the deputy district mayor in charge of the demolition of Mang Village, that Meng Yu's kidnapping is related to the demolition of Mang Village and drug trafficking in the village.

Gao Qiqiang is furious when he learn addicts take drugs at the casino run by his younger brother, Gao Qisheng. He fears that Gao Qisheng's drug trafficking crimes will be revealed by the police. Consequently, to protect his brother, after finding out that Gao

Qisheng's henchman kidnapped Mang Yu, he asks Chen Jinmo and Gao Qisheng to save Mang Yu. After rescuing Meng Yu, Gao Qisheng beats Li Hongwei to death with a frozen fish because Li Hongwei insulted him by mocking the Gao brothers for previously being obscure fish vendors.

To lure Li Hongwei's killer, the police spread news that Li Hongwei, who died after being sent to the hospital, is alive. Gao Qiqiang utilizes Huang Yao (Chen Jinmo's daughter), as a hostage to blackmail Chen Jinmo to kill Li Hongwei, because he worries Li Hongwei will confess to the police that the drug trafficking mastermind is Gao Qisheng. When Chen Jinmo arrives at the hospital and finds that Li Hongwei is dead, the police arrest him. Consequently, Chen Jinmo commits suicide and Gao Qiqiang adopts his daughter. To avenge her father's death, Huang Yao collects evidence of Gao Qiqiang's crimes and kills Chen Shuting in a car accident.

Gao Qiqiang's web of power grows in Jinghai City, encompassing grassroots policies to senior government officials. He uses his influence to become a government official and achieves his aims by bribing other officials. For instance, to sabotage the Supervisory Committee's investigation of gang crimes and corruption, he bribes Yang Jian, Meng Yu's husband, who was once a narcotics police officer. Through Gao Qiqiang's contacts, Yang Jian is promoted to director of the Jinghai Electricity Bureau, which helps Gao Qiqiang monopolize the entire electrical power system.

In contrast, An Xin is demoted from a criminal police officer to a traffic police officer. His seniors and friends are tempted into illegal activities by Gao Qiqiang's powerful connections, forcing them to conspire with him. For example, after a decade of employment, An Xin's master, Cao Chuang, gives in to pressure from his boss, Zhao Lidong, Jinghai's deputy major, to conceal evidence of Xu Jiang's organ trafficking to advance his position. Zhang Biao, An Xin's colleague, becomes Tang Xiaolong's collaborator due to Zhang's wife taking bribes from Tang Xiaolong. Zhang Biao divulges information to Tang Xiaolong before Tang is

investigated for loan sharking. The brutal criminal gang led by Gao Qiqiang has destroyed many lives. An Xin, who is adamant about dismantling this criminal gang, realizing that all the police officers' families and friends were threatened by the gang, chooses to break up with Meng Yu to protect her.

Gao Qiqiang creates an airtight wall of protection around himself by offering bribes to and colluding with government officials, including retired cadres. Some government officials, such as Mr. Huang, a retired veteran cadre in a nursing home, and Zhao Lidong, Jinghai City's deputy mayor, provide Gao Qiqiang the opportunity to become a government official and thus acquiesce to his crimes.

There are also several instances of charity. Kindergartens and nursing homes are built and provided free to officials' families. As violent crimes worsen, Gao Qiqiang's henchmen are apprehended in turn, and protective umbrellas sheltering him are gradually exposed. A national crackdown on organized gang crimes succeeds at the novel's end. Underworld criminals led by Gao Qiqiang are arrested and brought to justice, and Gao Qiqiang is sentenced to death.

This novel has excellent perspectives on characterization and narrative techniques, and unique characters are portrayed. For instance, Gao Qiqiang, an obscure fishmonger, becomes a sophisticated, vicious criminal. His complex personality is vividly depicted. As a round character,¹ he takes care of his younger siblings, protecting them from harm and breaking laws on occasion to protect his younger brother. As a husband, he respects and loves his wife (Chen Shuting).

Initially virtuous and kind, Gao Qiqiang's thirst for power brutalizes his criminal methods. He penetrates the real estate and

¹ Round characters are lifelike figures with complex, multifaceted personalities with depth and dimension, often undergoing personal development over a story's course. Flat characters have little complexity and depth of personality (bit.ly/3RZQTRe, accessed 25 April 2023).

electrical power systems and amasses wealth through loan sharking and bribery, inserting his cronies into social systems. For example, he bribes Zhao Lidong in exchange for a government position. He dispatches Chen Jinmo to kill Li Shun, the father of a mentally ill young man (Li Qing), to create trouble for the government demolition of Mang Village.

Having been raised in impoverished circumstances, Gao Qiqiang has spent his entire life captive of desire for money and power. When facing social injustice, Gao Qiqiang makes evil rather than virtuous choices. The gap between Gao Qiqiang and An Xin widens, transforming them from friends to enemies.

With a kind and righteous personality, An Xin is a flat character. Over two decades, a witness, Gao, becomes a criminal underworld leader as they become adversaries. The morality and justice An champions starkly contrast Gao's ongoing degeneration.

An's love for country and people was nurtured by his family. His father was a police officer and died in the line of duty when An was a child. His adoptive father (An Changlin) is also a dedicated and diligent police officer. In his two-decade battle with Gao Qiqiang, An Xin's loyalty to justice makes him never relinquish his insistence on justice. "An Xin" homophonically refers to 'safe and sound' in Chinese and is a message that justice will be served as long as An Xin is around. He is an idealist.

Various characters epitomize the complexity of human nature, suggesting the insatiable lust for power and money, love for family, and insistence on justice. Minor characters such as Chen Shuting and Chen Jinmo are also depicted as complex and multifaceted. These criminals demonstrate love and trust for their beloved families and friends. Their contradictory complex traits add to their charm. For instance, vicious Chen Shuting is involved in illicit gambling and is instrumental in Gao Qiqiang's success through her collusion with Uncle Tai. Nevertheless, she embodies a mother's love for her son. Chen Jinmo, a ruthless killer who kills whomever Gao Qiqiang orders, loves his daughter (Huang Yao) in ways that resonate with viewers and readers.

The narrator comments on several characters through the use of the third-person omniscient perspective. Several minor characters are represented, and their temptations and difficulties epitomize social issues reflecting injustices and ordinary people's hardships. For instance, Li Qing and his father (Li Shun) are both sacrificed in the conflict between Li Youtian and Gao Qiqiang. Li Shun is killed in an accident caused by Chen Jinmo, who is dispatched by Gao Qiqiang to sabotage the government's plan to demolish Mang Village. The unfortunate psychopath, Li Qing, depends on his father for financial support and takes medicine every day. After Li Shun's death, Li Youtian incites Li Qing to kidnap Gao Qiqiang's stepson to exact revenge on his father, causing turmoil for Gao Qiqiang.

Gao Qisheng represents educated young people instilled with the notion that their destinies can be altered by strenuous decades-long education and also narrow-minded, bossy, moody, sensitive, and brutal young men. Tempted by money and power, Gao loses control, commits crimes, and is eventually killed by his brother. A graduate with a promising future, Gao's sensitivity and low self-esteem, stemming from his hard life experiences, contribute to his inability to deal with Cao Bin and Li Hongwei ridiculing his poverty, which is why he beats his classmate (Cao Bin) and Li Hongwei. Education does not provide a bright future nor quell the thirst for power, money, and recognition.

In 2023, the thirty-nine-episode TV series of the same name broadcast as *Kuang Biao* had cast members including Zhang Songwen and Zhang Yi. The story begins with a flashback and is supplemented with an aside. The TV series shares a plot similar to the novel except for deleting the details that Xu Jiang is the mastermind of organ trafficking and substituting pig trotter noodles for the novel's beef noodles. Brotherhood, love, family, crime, revenge, power, and desire are interwoven in a complex several-character web. Humor, symbolism, and detailed descriptions of the minor characters add to the TV series' appeal.

Since Kuang Biao's broadcast, numerous discussions and articles have been published on CNKI (Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure). As Huang notes, "From an obscure fishmonger to a triad boss, Gao Qiqiang's changes reflect the unquenchable desire of human nature when faced with the temptation of power" (2023:56, my translation).

Zheng comments, "Instead of purposefully erasing characters' variances within the same type, *Kuang Biao* uses them to highlight the incompatibility of the mob's relationships and create tension" (2023: 51, my translation).

The Changchun Daily (2023) observes:

The TV series portrays a realistic creation embodying the theme while also hitting the pain of reality and mapping the changes of the times with each character's unique growth experiences. It also reflects on social reality by delving deeper into the reasons behind the formation of evil forces and their protective umbrellas (my translation).

The People's Liberation Army Newspaper (2023) comments, "From cell phones and television to the demolition of Mang Village, *Kuang Biao* is a story with a sense of the times and realistic significance for its reflection on social changes in different periods" (my translation).

Brotherhood is a major selling point of the TV series, and love between family members contributes to the complexity of Gao Qiqiang's character. As Mario notes, "Brotherhood is a conventional relationship, but it has the same force and meaning as one of blood" (2001:135). A sense of responsibility is the biggest advantage of brotherhood. Most characters in the novel lack functional families, and an answer for yearning for love and family lies in brotherhood. Social injustice results in violence to protect their lives and advance their social position. Gao Qiqiang and the Tang brothers are from lower social classes and lost their parents. After Gao Qiqiang becomes the chairman of the Jiangong Group, his appreciation of Tang Xiaohu's competence leads to Tang Xiaohu

becoming his accomplice. Tang Xiaolong's trust in Gao Qiqiang is the motivation for making money through loan sharking and illegal gambling after Tang Xiaolong's release from prison.

Detailed descriptions of minor characters are illustrated in the TV series. For example, Li Qing, the victim of his father's death, suffers from mental illness. The TV series adds a plot involving An Xin and Lu Han dropping by to investigate the cause of Li Shun's death, ostensibly to have lunch with him. The novel's meticulously detailed descriptions of Li Qing are omitted, but his characterization in the TV series associates Li Qing with everyday life, instilling vivid, lifelike qualities and emphasizing the tight bond with his father, Li Shun.

Humor in the series incorporates death, violence, crimes, and love, offering the audience a thrilling binge-watching experience with comic relief. One amusing scene involves Gao Qiqiang and Xu Jiang beating each other's heads with liquor bottles in the Baijinhuan Hotel, both holding their heads and crying out in pain. Given both are vicious criminals, their behavior enhances the authenticity of their reactions. Moreover, at his son's funeral, Xu Jiang, a ruthless organ trafficking criminal, prepares a table full of Wahaha (a popular drink among kids) as offerings in stark contrast to his cruelty.

Food in the TV series, such as noodles with pig trotters and Cantonese rice noodle rolls, further adds to the characters' credible qualities. During the TV series' filming, Zhang Songwen who plays Gao Qiqiang, suggests that pig's trotter noodles, a Guangzhou specialty, is more realistic than beef noodles, a Gansu Province specialty, and should be used in the TV series instead of the novel's beef noodles.

Symbolism in the TV series includes the noodles with pig trotters, reflecting the complexity of Gao Qiqiang's attributes. Such food was not affordable for the Gao brothers in their childhood. Gao Qiqiang saves money to buy it for his younger siblings on birthdays, suggesting his love for them. Later, when An Xin suspects that Gao Qiqiang is involved in Xu Lei's death, Gao Qiqiang invites An Xin to

eat pig's trotter noodles and tells An Xin the story of how he couldn't afford such food in his childhood, suggesting to An that he is honest and does not commit crimes.

In addition to rice noodle rolls and noodles with trotters, *Sunzi bingfa* 'The Art of War'¹ makes a few cameos in the TV series. After the fishmonger, Gao Qiqiang, is released from prison, An Xin recommends Gao read *The Art of War* to broaden his horizons. Gao subsequently combines desire and ambition with military tactics, using Sunzi's work as a guide as he works his way up the social ladder. For example, one of the tactics in *Sunzi bingfa* is "When you surround an army, leave an outlet free. Do not press a desperate foe too hard" (Giles 2022:373). Gao uses this strategy to cope with the Tang brothers, who bullied Gao when he was a fishmonger. Gao Qiqiang, however, employs them to work for him after he becomes a triad boss and does not take revenge.

Since its broadcast, *The Knockout* has been a favorite of domestic viewers and viewers abroad due to its "higher production value and the nuanced plot focusing on the decades-long rivalry between a clean cop and crime boss."² *Global Times* comments:

The Knockout shows the occasional change of fate and the complexity of human nature with a realistic and flowing story. It is worth noting that Gao Qiqiang is a character that is no longer a stereotypical role seen in other similar dramas thanks to the actor's adept acting (<https://bit.ly/41Lnyoe>, accessed 5 May 2023).

Meanwhile, *Foreign Policy* comments: "*The Knockout* is filled with police chases, nuanced characters, excellent acting, and

¹ *Sunzi bingfa* 'The Art of War' is a fifth-century BCE military treatise written by the Chinese strategist, Sun Wu. Covering all aspects of warfare, it seeks to advise commanders on how to prepare, mobilize, attack, defend, and treat the vanquished (bit.ly/3H1Unw9, accessed 26 April 2023, my translation).

² <http://bit.ly/48mXPxS>, accessed 5 May 2023.

thrilling suspense. Additionally, it is full of sights of scenes of everyday life and delicately presented corruption."²

Kuang Biao breaks the conventional perception of crime series featuring criminals as one-dimensional bad guys. Compared to the TV series, readers are less enthusiastic. Many Douban users were interested in the novel after watching the TV series but found the plot disorganized and confusing because of a lack of convincing connections between incidents. The characters' charm and attributes are more impressive than a lack of vividness in depictions of their inner worlds. Characters lack authenticity because each chapter only introduces their criminal activities. Another criticism is that the unimpressive and wooden dialogue makes the reading experience devoid of aesthetic enjoyment.

Readers enjoy the story for its realism and gripping plot. In contrast to many criminal novels, which concentrate on the protagonist's personality and are grounded in real cases, *Kuang Biao* exposes social issues by highlighting underprivileged people's hardships, e.g., the mentally ill Li Qing. Additionally, *Kuang Biao* is significant in reflecting the national crackdown on organized gang crime by introducing various crimes.

² <https://bit.ly/48gmof2>, accessed 5 May 2023.

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CHINESE TERMS

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|---|----------------------|
| An Changlin 安长林 | An Liu 暗流 |
| An Xin 安欣 | Bai Jiangbo 白江波 |
| Bai Jinhan 白金瀚 | Cao Bin 曹斌 |
| Cao Chuang 曹闯 | Chen Jinmo 陈金默 |
| Chen Shuting 陈书婷 | |
| <i>Chunjiangyingxiong zhi xiucai yushang bing</i>
春江英雄之秀才遇上兵 | |
| <i>Dielianhua</i> Cong Tingzhou xiang Changsha 蝶恋花: 从汀州向长沙 | |
| Douban 豆瓣 | Fang Mu 方木 |
| Feng Lang 风浪 | Gansu 甘肃 |
| Gao Qilan 高启兰 | Gao Qiqiang 高启强 |
| Gao Qisheng 高启盛 | Gao Ye 高叶 |
| Gong Kaijiang 龚开疆 | Guangzhou 广州 |
| Huang Yao 黄瑶 | Jiangong 建工 Group |
| Jinghai 京海 | <i>Kuang Biao</i> 狂飙 |
| Li Hongwei 李宏伟 | Li Qing 李青 |
| Li Shun 李顺 | Li Xiang 李响 |
| Li Youtian 李有田 | Lu Han 陆寒 |

Mangcun 莽村	Mao Zedong 毛泽东
Meng Yu 孟钰	
Mengyuan Bar, Mengyuan Jiuba 梦缘酒吧	
Ping Jing 平静	Qingdao 青岛
Qingdao chu ban she 青岛出版社	
Shaanxi Normal University, Shaanxi shi fan da xue 陕西师范大学	
<i>Sunzi bingfa</i> 孙子兵法	<i>Ta shi shui</i> 他是谁
Tang Xiaohu 唐小虎	Tang Xiaolong 唐小龙
Uncle Tai, Tai Shu 泰叔	Wahaha 娃哈哈
Wu Jing 吴晶	Xiaolingtong 小灵通
<i>Xiaoshi de shiyiceng</i> 消失的十一层	
<i>Xinlizui zhi chengshi zhi guang</i> 心理罪之城市之光	
Xu Jiang 徐江	Xu Jizhou 徐纪周
Xu Lei 徐雷	Xu Yuanchong 许渊冲
Yang Jian 杨建	Ye Boyu 叶伯钰
<i>Yongbumomie de fanhao</i> 永不磨灭的番号	
Zhang Biao 张彪	Zhang Songwen 张颂文
Zhang Yi 张译	Zhao Lidong 赵立冬
Zhong Asi 钟阿四	Zhu Junyi 朱俊懿